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THE NEGRO AS A FARMER

BY BOOKER T. WASHINGTON.

ONE of the most striking facts that I have learned from a study of the bulletins of the 1910 census thus far issued has been the rapid and continued increase in the number of negro farmers in the Southern States. For example: there has been an increase of 469,061, or 17.9 per cent., in the total number of farms and farmers, white and colored, in the Southern States, which shows that the South is far in advance of the rest of the country, as far as concerns the increase in the number of farms. In fact, fully three-fourths of all the total increase in the number of farms in the United States during the past ten years is in the Southern States. In the North Atlantic, what we used to call in the old geographies the New England and Middle Atlantic States, there has been a decrease of almost four per cent. in the number of farms during this period. In the North Central or States of the Middle West, the increase amounts to only one per cent. There has been an increase of fifty-two per cent. in the number of farms in the Western States, but while the percentage of increase in this part of the country is large, the absolute increase in farms and farmers was only 126,336, as against an increase of 469,061 in the Southern States.

The point, however, which I wish to emphasize is that, rapid as has been the increase in total number of farms of both races in the South, the number of negro farmers has increased proportionately more rapidly than the number of white farmers. While the white farmers in fifteen Southern States increased from 1,870,600 in 1900 to 2,191,805 in 1910, the negro farmers increased from 739,835 in 1900 to 887,691 in 1910, making an increase of 17.0 per cent. for the whites and 19.9 per cent. for the blacks.

No figures have yet been published showing the relative

increase, as between the white and colored people, in the number of landowners, and it does not follow, of course, that the number of negro landowners has increased in the same ratio as the number of negro farmers. In fact, the statistics of land ownership in the Southern States show that, not taking account of the different races, the total number of landowners has increased only about half as rapidly as the total number of farmers. In what proportion the 170,032 new landowners in the South are distributed between the races, has not, so far as I know, been definitely ascertained.

While the census figures show that, taking the Southern States as a whole, the negro farmers have increased more rapidly than the white farmers, they also show that this increase has not been evenly distributed throughout the South. In some States, notably in Louisiana, there has not only been no increase in the number of negro farmers, but there has been a very marked absolute decrease, a decrease of not less than 3,350 negro farmers, during the ten years.

The following table shows the actual numbers of negro farmers, together with the changes and fluctuation in the numbers and proportion of the white and colored farmers in fifteen Southern States. The figures do not include Delaware or the District of Columbia, although these are usually classed in the census figures with the Southern States.

TABLE SHOWING NUMBER OF NEGRO AND WHITE FARMERS FOR FIFTEEN SOUTHERN STATES, SHOWING INCREASE FOR EACH RACE

State.	1900		1910		Increase.	
	White.	Colored.	White.	Colored.	White.	Colored.
Alabama	129,137	94,083	152,347	110,373	23,210	16,290
Arkansas	131,711	46,983	150,920	63,355	19,209	16,372
Florida	27,288	13,526	35,125	14,709	7,837	1,183
Georgia	141,865	82,826	168,158	122,341	26,293	39,515
Kentucky	223,429	11,238	247,036	11,706	23,607	468
Louisiana	57,809	58,160	65,460	54,810	7,651	*3,350
Maryland	40,169	5,843	42,402	6,367	2,233	524
Mississippi ...	92,124	128,679	109,390	164,430	17,266	35,751
North Carolina	169,773	54,864	187,831	65,594	18,058	10,730
Oklahoma	94,775	13,225	168,910	20,528	74,135	7,303
South Carolina	69,954	85,401	79,484	96,696	9,530	11,295
Tennessee	190,728	33,895	207,260	38,249	16,532	4,354
Texas	286,654	65,536	346,565	69,812	59,911	4,276
Virginia	123,052	44,834	135,743	48,019	12,691	3,185
West Virginia.	92,132	742	95,174	702	3,042	*40
Total...	1,870,600	739,835	2,191,805	887,691	321,205	147,856

* Decrease.

One of the interesting things brought out by the comparison of the different States in this table is the fact that, in the five States of Oklahoma, Texas, Virginia, Louisiana, and Florida, the number of white farmers has increased at a more rapid rate than the number of negro farmers. Five other States, West Virginia, Kentucky, Maryland, South Carolina, and Alabama show the same rate of increase for both races. In the five States, Tennessee, North Carolina, Mississippi, Georgia, and Arkansas, in which nearly half of the total negro population in the South live, negro farmers have increased during the past ten years more rapidly than the white farmers, in proportion to population of the respective races of these States.

In Georgia and Mississippi the number of negro farmers has increased both absolutely and relatively more rapidly than the same class of whites. In Georgia the number of negro farmers has grown from 82,826 in 1900 to 122,341 in 1910, a gain of 39,515 in ten years. In the same period the number of white farmers in Georgia increased from 141,865 in 1900 to 168,158 in 1910, a gain of 26,293 in ten years.

In Mississippi, where negroes now represent fifty-six per cent. of the total population and sixty per cent. of the farmers, the number of negro farmers increased from 128,679 in 1900 to 164,430 in 1910, an increase of 35,751. During the same period the number of white farmers increased from 92,124 in 1900 to 109,390 in 1910, an increase of 17,266.

Whatever else this increase of negro farmers may mean, it certainly indicates that, in proportion to their numbers, and in spite of a certain amount of negro emigration to the North and a considerable immigration of the white population to the South, negroes are entering in proportionately larger numbers into farming in the South, and becoming more and more responsible, either as owners or as tenants, for the success or failure of agriculture.

I can, perhaps, give a better idea of the part which negro farmers, as compared with white farmers, are actually taking in the agriculture of the South by comparing the statistics of farmers with the statistics of population. The following table shows the relative percentage of the white and colored in the total population of fifteen Southern States in 1900 and 1910, together with the percentage of white and colored farmers for the same periods.

TABLE SHOWING PERCENTAGE OF NEGRO AND WHITE FARMERS COMPARED WITH POPULATION OF EACH RACE

State.	1900				1910			
	Per Cent. of Total.		Per Cent. of Total.		Per Cent. of Total.		Per Cent. of Total.	
	Population.		Farmers.		Population.		Farmers.	
	White.	Colored.	White.	Colored.	White.	Colored.	White.	Colored.
Alabama	54.8	45.2	58.0	42.0	57.5	42.5	58.0	42.0
Arkansas	72.0	28.0	74.0	26.0	71.8	28.2	70.0	30.0
Florida	56.3	43.7	67.0	33.0	58.9	41.1	70.0	30.0
Georgia	53.3	46.7	63.0	37.0	54.9	45.1	58.0	42.0
Kentucky	86.7	13.3	95.0	5.0	88.6	11.4	96.0	4.0
Louisiana	52.8	47.2	50.0	50.0	56.8	43.2	54.0	46.0
Maryland	80.2	19.8	87.0	13.0	82.1	17.9	87.0	13.0
Mississippi . . .	41.3	58.7	42.0	58.0	43.7	56.3	40.0	60.0
North Carolina .	66.7	33.3	76.0	24.0	68.4	31.6	74.0	26.0
Oklahoma	84.8	15.2	88.0	12.0	87.2	12.8	89.0	11.0
South Carolina .	41.6	58.4	45.0	55.0	44.8	55.2	45.0	55.0
Tennessee	76.2	23.8	85.0	15.0	78.3	21.7	84.0	16.0
Texas	79.6	20.4	81.0	19.0	82.3	17.7	83.0	17.0
Virginia	64.3	35.7	73.0	27.0	67.4	32.6	74.0	26.0
West Virginia .	95.5	4.5	99.0	1.0	94.7	5.3	99.0	1.0

This table shows that while the white population has grown more rapidly than the colored population in all but two of the fifteen Southern States mentioned, namely West Virginia and Arkansas, the number of white farmers has grown more rapidly than the negro farmers in only five, namely: Oklahoma, Texas, Virginia, Louisiana, and Florida. In the States of Oklahoma, Texas, and Florida, there has been a very considerable immigration of farmers from the Northern States. In Virginia there has been a very considerable decrease in the negro, as compared with the white, population. At the same time, the decrease in the number of negroes as compared with the white farmers has been only one per cent.

In Louisiana, where there seems to have been an absolute loss of 3,550 of negro farmers, conditions are not so easily explained. The white population of Louisiana has grown to some extent by immigration, and there has been a very considerable emigration from Louisiana to Arkansas and Oklahoma, and this has tended to alter the ratio of the white and colored population, but does not wholly account for the decrease in farmers, as there has been no corresponding decrease in the rate of increase in the negro population. The figures seem to indicate, therefore, that negro emigration from Louisiana westward has come almost wholly from the country districts. An explanation suggested is that the coming of the boll weevil has discouraged negro farmers in that part of the country. The boll weevil

has not had the same effect elsewhere, however, so that I am disposed to attribute the decrease to local causes which are not yet wholly explained.

The census for 1910 shows, then, that there has been a proportionately larger increase in the negro than in the white farmers in the Southern States. I do not intend to suggest that this fact by itself is of any great importance. The real significance of this increase in the number and proportion of negro farmers is that it has gone along with an enormous development of Southern agriculture as a whole.

There has been, for example, an increase of \$4,034,483,000 in the total values of farm lands and buildings during the last ten years, and an increase of \$112,284,000 in the value of farm machinery. The South is spending \$74,324,000 more for farm labor and \$46,145,000 more for fertilizers in 1910 than it did in 1900. While there has been a very large decrease in the farm acreage in the South, due principally to the fact that hundreds of thousands of acres of mountain, timber, and swamp land, reported as farms in 1900 and used to some extent for grazing purposes, were not reported as farms in 1910. At the same time there has been an increase of 24,058,000 acres in the amount of improved land, and an average decrease of from fifteen to thirty acres in the size of farms. The decrease has been fifteen acres for farms in the South Atlantic, and thirty acres for farms in the South-Central States. Both these facts indicate a more intensive and higher type of farming; indicate, in short, that farmers were putting more labor and more intelligence into the cultivation of the soil in 1910 than they did in 1900.

There has been a larger increase in value of farm lands and a larger increase in expenditures for labor and for fertilizers in the Southern States than in any other part of the country, except the Western States. If one compares the different geographical divisions, as to the increase in land values, it appears that in the North Atlantic States there has been an increase of 27 per cent. in the value of farming lands and buildings; in the North Central States this increase has been 114 per cent.; in the South Atlantic the increase has been 105 per cent.; in the South Central, 133 per cent., and in the West 193 per cent.

The value of an acre of farm land has increased 32 per cent. in the North Atlantic; 99 per cent. in the North Cen-

tral; 110 per cent. in the South Atlantic; 152 per cent. in the South Central; 157 per cent. in the Western States.

Not only has this great advance been made in the South, where the negro has a proportionately larger share in agriculture than he had a decade ago, but if we compare the Southern States in which the number of negroes is proportionately large with those States in which it is proportionately small, it will be seen that there has been on the whole just as much progress, if not more, where the proportion of negro farmers was large as where it was small. The following table shows the percentage of negro and white farmers, and the percentages of increase in the average value per acre of land in the different Southern States. In these tables, the first seven States are arranged in the order of the percentage of negro farmers, and the last eight in the order of the percentage of white farmers.

PERCENTAGE OF NEGRO AND WHITE FARMERS IN SEVEN STATES HAVING HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF NEGRO FARMERS WITH AVERAGE INCREASE IN LAND PER ACRE IN EACH STATE

State.	Per Cent. Negro Farmers.	Per Cent. White Farmers.	Per Cent. Increase In Value of Land Per Acre.
Mississippi.....	60	40	115
South Carolina.....	55	45	172
Louisiana.....	46	54	78
Georgia.....	42	58	156
Alabama.....	42	58	113
Arkansas.....	30	70	118
Florida.....	30	70	141

PERCENTAGE OF NEGRO AND WHITE FARMERS IN EIGHT STATES HAVING HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF WHITE FARMERS WITH AVERAGE INCREASE IN LAND PER ACRE IN EACH STATE

State.	Per Cent. Negro Farmers.	Per Cent. White. Farmers.	Per Cent. Increase In Value of Land Per Acre.
West Virginia.....	01	99	67
Kentucky.....	05	95	65
Oklahoma.....	11	89	245
Maryland.....	13	87	41
Tennessee.....	16	84	84
Texas.....	17	83	204
Virginia.....	26	74	100
North Carolina.....	26	74	138

From all these figures, it would seem to be apparent that, in spite of all that is said to the contrary, the negro in the South is beginning to heed the advice of those who have told him to stick to the farm. It does not follow from this, however, that negro farmers are sticking fast on the land on

which they were planted years ago. On the contrary, the census figures show that there is a very considerable movement of the negro population to the new territory, where there is opportunity to better their condition, as in the case of the negro population in Oklahoma, which has grown 147 per cent. in the past ten years. But, on the whole, the negro is sticking to the soil.

At the same time these figures prove, it would appear, that the negro is able and willing to improve in his methods of farming. It is evident that all this advance in land values could not have taken place in spite of the negro. He must have had, as he has always had, his share during this time, in the work of building up the farming industry in the South, and, considering the little education he has had in agriculture and the limitations owing to his lack of general education that prevented his taking advantage of the opportunities for improvement that are offered to farmers in other parts of the country, it must be admitted that he has done well.

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON.